

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01930 131543Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1329
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1930

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, MARR, USUN, IS
SUBJ: DETENTION AND RELEASE OF UNIFIL SOLDIERS IN TYRE AREA
JULY 12

1. UN SOURCE HAS GIVEN US INFORMATION REGARDING INCIDENT
AROUND TYRE JULY 12 WHICH INVOLVED DETENTION OF ABOUT 51
UNIFIL SOLDIERS BY PALESTINIANS. AS OF NOON JULY 13, OUR
SOURCE CONFIRMED THAT ALL HAD BEEN RELEASED AND THAT ERSKINE
REPORTED ARAFAT HAD EXPRESSED HIS APOLOGIES AND PUT BLAME
ON REJECTIONISTS.

2. AS BEST WE CAN PIECE TOGETHER INCIDENT, IT ALL BEGAN 1600
HOURS LOCAL JULY 12 WHEN UNIFIL WAS INFORMED THAT THERE WAS
EXCHANGE OF FIRE BETWEEN FRENCH AND ARMED ELEMENTS NEAR
DAYR AMIS WITH RESULT THAT THREE FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE CAPTURED.
NEXT, AN ARMED PALESTINIAN ELEMENT ATTEMPTED TO MOVE FROM
TYRE TO SCENE OF FIRING BUT WAS STOPPED BY FIJIANS. THIS
APPARENTLY AROUSED IRE OF ARMED ELEMENTS WHICH RETURNED TO
TYRE AND BEGAN STOPPING ALL UN VEHICLES ENTERING TYRE AND
HOLDING UN PERSONNEL HOSTAGE. DURING NEXT FOUR HOURS ABOUT
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51 UN SOLDIERS WERE STOPPED AND HELD INCLUDING UNMO'S, FRENCH,
NIGERIANS, SENEGALESE, IRANIAN, NEPALESE AND CANADIAN.

2. BY LATE EVENING JULY 12, MOST UN SOLDIERS WERE RELEASED
AND ONLY ONE SENEGALESE SOLDIER WAS REPORTED WOUNDED.
NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONDUCTED BETWEEN UNIFIL AND PLO IN BOTH
BEIRUT AND TYRE. UNIFIL REPORTED THAT ARAFAT'S ORDERS TO

ARMED ELEMENTS TO RELEASE UNIFIL FORCES WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY OBEYED, AND THAT ARAFAT ASKED ERSKINE NOT TO PUBLICIZE INCIDENT.

3. LAST UNIFIL REPORT, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, STATED THAT, WHILE ALL DETAINEES WERE RELEASED ON JULY 12, FIVE RIFLES, TWO PISTOLS, RADIO AND SOME OTHER SMALL ITEMS WERE BEING HELD.

4. COMMENT: OUR SOURCE TENDED TO PLAY DOWN ANY GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS FLARE-UP. DESPITE ARAFAT'S APPARENT DESIRE TO KEEP INCIDENT QUIET, STORY HAS GOTTEN TO PRESS. WE EXPECT UN WILL DO ITS BEST TO MINIMIZE PUBLICITY. PRESS REPORTING ON UNIFIL EVENTS CONTINUES TO BE SELECTIVE WITH EVERYONE TRYING TO REPORT WHAT HE WANTS. AN EXAMPLE, "JERUSALEM POST" JULY 13, FRONT PAGED STORY DATED METULLA WHICH REPORTED THAT SEVERAL NEPALESE SOLDIERS WERE KILLED JULY 11 BY PALESTINIAN MINES NEAR TAIBE. OUR SOURCE SAYS THERE IS NO BASIS WHATSOEVER FOR STORY.
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